

Chaucers
Tale of
Thopas

So fiers was his corage,
That doun he leyde him in that plas
To make his steede som solas,
And yaf hym good forage.
O seinte Marie, benedicite!
What eyeth this love at me
To bynde me so soore?
Me dremed at this nyght, pardee,
An Elf-queene shal my lemman be
And slepe under my goore,
An Elf-queene wol I love, ywis,
for in this world no womman is
Worthy to be my make
In towne;

Alle othere wommen I forsake,
And to an Elf-queene I me take
By dale and eek by downe.

IN TO his sadel he clamb anon,
And priketh over stile and stoon
An Elf-queene for tespye;
Til he so longe hadde riden and goon
That he foond, in a pryve woon,
The contree of fairye

So wilde;
for in that contree was ther noon
That to him dorste ryde or goon,
Neither wyf ne childe;
Til that ther cam a greet geaunt,
His name was sire Olifaunt,
A perilous man of dede;
He seyde, Child, by Termagaunt!
But if thou prike out of myn haunt,
Anon I sle thy steede
With mace!

Heere is the queene of fayerye,
With harpe, and pipe, and symphonye,
Dwellynge in this place.

THE child seyde, Also moote I thee!
Tomorwe wol I meete thee
Whan I have myn armoure.
And yet I hope, par ma fay,
That thou shalt with this launcegay
Abyen it ful sowre;

Thy mawe
Shal I percen, if I may,
Er it be fully pryde of day,
for heere thou shalt be slawe.
Sire Thopas drow abak ful faste;
This geant at hym stoness caste
Out of a fel staf/slynge;

But faire escapeth sire Thopas;
And al it was thurgh Goddes gras,
And thurgh his fair berynge.

ET listeth, lordes, to my tale
Murier than the nightyngale,
for now I wol yow rowne
How sir Thopas with sydes smale,
Prikynge over hill and dale,
Is comen agayn to towne.
His murie men comanded he
To make hym bothe game and glee,
for nedes mooste he fighte
With a geaunt with hevedes three,

for paramour and jolitee
Of oon that shoon ful brighte.
Do come, he seyde, my mynstrales,
And geestours for to tellen tales,
Anon in myn armyng;
Of romances that been roiales
Of popes and of cardinales
And eek of love/lykynge.

They fette hym first the sweete wyn,
And mede eek in a mazelyn,

And roial spicerye
Of gyngebre that was ful fyn,
And lycorys, and eek comyn,
With sugre that is so trye.
He dide next his white leere
Of clooth of lake, fyn and cleere,
A breech and eek a sherte;

And next his sherte an aketoun,
And over that an haubergeoun
for Percyng of his herte;

And over that a fyn hawberk,
Was al ywrought of Jewes werk,
ful strong it was of plate;

And over that his cote/armour,
As whit as is a lilye flour,
In which he wol debate.

His sheeld was al of gold so reed,
And thereinne was a bores heed,
A charboele bisyde;

And there he swoor, on ale and breed,
How that the geaunt shal be deed,
Bityde what bityde!

His jambeux were of quyrboilly,
His swerdes shethe of yvory,
His helm of laton bright;

His sadel was of rewel/boon;
His brydel as the sonne shoon,
Or as the moone light.

His spere it was of fyn ciprees,
That bodeth werre, and nothyng pees,
The heed ful sharpe ygrounde;

His steede was al dappel/gray,
It gooth an ambil in the way
ful softely and rounde
In londe.

Loo, lordes myne, heere is a fit!
If ye wol any moore of it,
To telle it wol I fonde.

The Second Fit.

HOLDE youre mouth, par
charitee,
Bothe knyght and lady free,
And herkneth to my spelle;
Of batailles and of chivalry,
And of ladyes love/drury,
Anon I wol yow telle.
Men speken of romances
of prys,
Of horn child, & of Ypotys,
Of Bevis and of sir Gy,
Of sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour;
But sir Thopas, he bereth the flour
Of roial chivalry!

his goode steede al he bistrood,
And forth upon his wey he rood,
As sparle out of the bronde;
Upon his creest he bar a tour,
And thereinne stiked a lilye flour,
God shilde his cors fro shonde!
And for he was a knyght auntrous,
He nolde slepen in noon hous,
But ligen in his hooode;
His brighte helm was his wonger,
And by hym baiteth his dextrer
Of herbes fyne and goode.
Hymself drank water of the well,
As dide the knyght sire Percyvell,
So worthy under wede;
Til on a day.....

**Heere the Hoost stynteth Chaucer of his Tale
of Thopas.**

A moore of this, for Goddes
dignitee!
Quod oure Hooste, for thou
makest me
So wery of thy verray lewednesse
That, also wisly God my soule

blesse,
Min eres aken of thy drasty speche.
Now swich a ryme the devel I biteche!
This may wel be ryme dogerel, quod he.

Why so? quod I; why wiltow lette me
Moore of my tale than another man,
Syn that it is the beste ryme I kan?

By God, quod he, for pleynly at a word,
Thy drasty rymyng is nat worth a toord;

Thou doost noght elles but despendedst
tyme;

Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme.

Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste
Or telle in prose somewhat, at the leeste,
In which ther be som murthe, or som
doctryne.

Gladly, quod I, by Goddes sweete pyne!
I wol yow telle a litel thyng in prose
That oghte liken yow, as I suppose,
Or elles, certes, ye been to daungerous.

It is a moral tale vertuous,
Al be it told somtyme in sondry wyse
Of sundry folk, as I shal yow devyse.

As thus; ye woot that every Evangelist,
That telleth us the peyne of Jhesu Crist
Ne seith nat al thyng as his felawe dooth;

But nathelees, hir sentence is al sooth,
And alle acorden as in hire sentence,
Al be ther in hir tellyng difference;

for somme of hem seyn moore, and somme
seyn lesse,

Whan they his pitous passioun expresse,
I meene of Marke, Mathew, Luc and John;

But doutelees hir sentence is al oon.
Therfore, lordynges alle, I yow bisече,
If that ye thynke I varie as in my speche,

As thus, though that I telle somewhat moore
Of proverbes, than ye han herd bifoore,
Comprehended in this litel tretys heere,

To enforce with the effect of my mateere;
And though I nat the same wordes seye,
As ye han herd, yet to yow alle I preye,

Blameth me nat; for as in my sentence
Ye shul not fynden moche difference
fro the sentence of this tretys lyte

After the which this murie tale I write.
And therfore herkneth what that I shal seye,
And lat me tellen al my tale, I preye.

Explicit.

HEERE BIGYNNETH CHAUCERS TALE OF MELIBEE.

A YONG man called
Melibeus, myghty &
riche, bigat upon his
wyf, that called was
Prudence, a dogh-
ter which that call-
ed was Sophie.
Upon a day bifel,
that he for his des-
port is went into the
feeldes, hym to pleye; his wyf and eek his
doghter bath he left inwith his hous, of
which the dore were fast yshette. Thre
of his olde foos han it espyed, and setten
laddres to the wallis of his hous, and by
wyndowes been entred, & betten his wyf,
and wounded his doghter with fyve mortal
woundes in fyve sondry places; this is to
seyn, in hir feet, in hire handes, in hir crys,
in hir nose, & in hire mouth; and leften hire
for deed, and wenten away.

WHAN Melibeus retourned was in-
to his hous, & saugh al this mes-
chief, he, lyk a madman, rentynge
his clothes, gan to wepe & crie. Prudence,
his wyf, as ferforth as she dorste, bisoghte
hym of his wepyng for to stynte; but nat
forthy he gan to crie & wepen evere lenger
the moore.

THIS noble wyf Prudence remem-
bred hire upon the sentence of O-
vide, in his book that cleped is The
Remedie of Love, whereas he seith, He
is a fool that destourbeth the mooder to
wepen in the deeth of hire child, til she have
wept hir fille, as for a certein tyme; & thanne
shal man doon his diligence with amyable
wordes hire to reconforte, and preyen hire
of hir wepyng for to stynte. for which re-
soun this noble wyf Prudence suffred hir
housbonde for to wepe & crie as for a cer-
tein space; and whan she saugh hir tyme,